Countering Pakistan's false propaganda in Islamic countries

1125. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the steps taken by Government to counter the false propaganda by Pakistan in Islamic Countries regarding Kashmir and the conditions of Muslims in India;

(b) whether Government are considering to send a strong delegation of prominent Muslims from different walks of life to Islamic Countries to counter the Pakistani propaganda; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Countering Pakistan's anti-India propaganda in the Islamic countries is an ongoing process. The Government and the Indian Missions continuously monitor such activities, particularly relating to Kashmir and the conditions of Muslims in India. Swift, comprehensive and effective action is taken to counter Pakistan's false and motivated propaganda. Factual information is regularly provided to decision makers; the media; and the Governments of these countries through the Indian Missions abroad as well as through the Missions of the Islamic countries in India. The Governments of these countries are also briefed during visits of high level delegations to India and from India to these countries.

(b) There is at present no proposal to send a delegation, comprising only prominent Muslim personalities, to the Islamic Countries.

(c) Does not arise.

Foreign tours of the President and officials of ICCR

1126. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:
DR. BAPU KALDATE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of foreign tours undertaken by the President and the officials of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in 1993 and 1994 (till date) stating the names of the countries visited and the purposes of their visits;

(b) what is the expenditure incurred by the President and the officials of the ICCR on each foreign trip; and

(c) what are the achievements of these foreign tours?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) and (b) The foreign tours undertaken by the president and the officials of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) are as follows:

1993

(i) President, ICCR toured abroad on two occasions and visited Austria, Japan and Thailand.

(ii) Director General, ICCR toured abroad on nine occasions and visited South Africa, Mauritius, Egypt, United Kingdom, USA, Hungary, Austria, France, Russia, Israel, China and Japan.

(iii) Private Secretary to the President, ICCR toured abroad on one occasion and visited Austria.

(iv) Assistant Private Secretary to President ICCR toured abroad on one occasion and visited Japan and Thailand.

1994

(i) President, ICCR toured abroad on one occasion and visited United Kingdom and France.

(ii) Dy. Director General (Programmes), ICCR toured abroad on one occasion and visited Egypt.

(iii) Assistant Private Secretary to President, ICCR toured abroad on one occasion and visited United Kingdom and France.

The purpose of their visits and the expenditure incurred on these visits is as per Annexure. (*See* Appendix 171, Annexure No. 24]

(c) The achievements of these foreign tours are as under:

The tours abroad have facilitated establishment of new cultural links, revived and strengthened the existing cultural relations and enhanced mutual understanding of India and other countries and institutions abroad. The visits have enhanced cultural exchanges at the institutional level and at the bilateral level facilitating people to people contact.

The tours abroad by President, ICCR and the officials of the ICCR have unilateraly given opportunities to negotiate steps and measures to further the objectives of ICCR as defined in the Memorandum of Association when the ICCR was established in 1950.

The visits abroad have facilitated a better understanding and appreciation abroad of Indian art and culture and put forth an image of India in the international community fulfilling its endeavour to continuously enhance people to people contact with an open attitude while being receptive to the cultures of other countries.

The visits abroad have provided a supporting role for exchange programmes with all friendly countries. The periodic visits and meetings with heads of cultural departments, organisations, institutions, scholars, intellectuals and policy makers are necessary in view of the emphasis on implementation of formal reciprocal arrangements for cultural exchanges contained in the Cultural Exchange Protocols.

Protection of Hindu temples in Vietnam

1127. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the jewels and properties of Hindu temples in Vietnam are in the custody of the National Bank of Vietnam; and

(b) if so, what steps are taken by our embassy to help the management of Hindu temples to recover those properties?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) The jewels and some other items of Saigon Thendayudhapani Temple belonging to the Chettiar Community who left Saigon in the wake of the fall of Saigon in 1975, has been lying in the custody of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of HO Chi Minh City.

(b) The properties have been retained in the custody of the Industrial and Commercial Bank and not handed over to the temple management committee, as per the wishes of the Chettiar Community.

US Counsul-General's comment on Economic policies of West Bengal

1128. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the comments recently made by the Consul-General of the United States of America at Calcutta openly criticising the economic and industrial policies of the Government of West Bengal;

(b) whether it is within the preview of a foreign diplomat to offer such public comments on our internal affairs; and

(c) whether Government will ask the US administration to make proper amends for this breach of etiquette on the part of its representative?